

Dr. Roger Green, American Christianity, Session 15, Evangelicalism in the 19th Century, Finney Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Green, American Christianity, Session 15, Evangelicalism in the 19th Century, Finney, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Roger Green's lecture, Session 15 of his American Christianity course, focuses on the pivotal role of Charles Grandison Finney and Dwight L. Moody in shaping 19th-century Evangelicalism. The lecture begins by noting its place within the course syllabus, situated in the "Years of Mid-Passage" (1865-1918) section, and clarifies that the second hour exam material has been covered. **The instructor explains that instead of broadly defining Evangelicalism, the session will examine it through the biographies and contributions of Finney and Moody, considered the most influential figures of the era.** The lecture initially concentrates on Finney, detailing his conversion experience in the "Burnt Over District" of New York, his ministry, his association with the abolitionist and co-educational Oberlin College, and his influential book on revivalism and its "new measures." **The session then introduces Dwight L. Moody, highlighting his Unitarian upbringing and his conversion in Boston, setting the stage for a further exploration of his impact in the subsequent lecture.**

**2. 20 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Green, American Christianity, Session 15 – Double click
icon to play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (Church History → American Christianity).**



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3. Briefing Document: Green, Session 15, Evangelicalism in the 19th Century, Finney

Briefing Document: 19th Century Evangelicalism in America - Finney and Moody

Overview: This lecture excerpt focuses on the emergence and shaping of 19th-century Evangelicalism in America through the biographical lens of two key figures: Charles Grandison Finney and Dwight L. Moody. Dr. Green emphasizes that by examining their lives, ministries, and teachings, a clearer understanding of the characteristics of this influential movement can be achieved. The lecture covers Finney's conversion, his revivalistic ministry, his association with Oberlin College, his "new measures" of revivalism, and the rise of voluntary societies. It then begins to introduce Dwight L. Moody, highlighting his conversion experience.

Main Themes and Important Ideas/Facts:

I. Introduction to 19th Century Evangelicalism:

- Dr. Green states that the lecture will focus on 19th-century Evangelicalism, specifically through the lives of Charles Grandison Finney and Dwight L. Moody, whom he identifies as "the two most important leaders in American Christianity, the shapers of American Christianity in the second half of the 19th century."
- The aim is to understand Evangelicalism by examining their contributions: "I hope that looking at their life, their lives, and also what they kind of contributed to American Christianity, I hope that will help us to identify what we would label as Evangelicalism because it is seen through the life and ministry teachings preachings of these two people."

II. Charles Grandison Finney (1792-1875):

- **Conversion and Ministry:** Born in Warren, Connecticut, his family moved to Adams, New York, in the "Burnt Over District," known for the emergence of various religious groups.
- Initially trained for law but experienced a dramatic conversion in 1821 near Adams, New York, leading him to pursue ministry.
- Became ordained in the Presbyterian Church through a mentorship.
- Developed an "itinerant revivalistic ministry" that became highly successful.

- **The Finneyite Revivals and the Third Great Awakening:** Dr. Green posits that Finney's revivals might constitute a "third great awakening" in America due to a perceived gap between them and the Second Great Awakening. "I personally believe there was enough of a gap between the second great awakening and the beginning of the ministry of Charles Grandison Finney that I believe there was enough of a gap that I would call a third great awakening, also called the Finneyite revivals."
- Finney gained international recognition, with a significant two-year ministry in England (1857-1858), contributing to "transatlantic revivalism."
- **Association with Oberlin College:** In 1835, Finney became the first professor of theology at the newly founded Oberlin College.
- Later served as president of Oberlin College from 1851 to 1866.
- Oberlin College was significant as:
 - The "first college in America that was founded with the abolitionism of slavery as part of the mission." This highlights Finney's strong abolitionist stance and his use of Oberlin as a "headquarters for abolitionism."
 - The "first co-educational institution in America," notably where Antoinette Brown became the first woman to receive a degree in theology.
 - An institution that "preached and taught revivalism theologically."
 - Known for the "doctrine of sanctification or the doctrine of holiness," influenced by Wesleyan theology but with an emphasis on "empowerment for ministry" rather than solely "purity of heart." Dr. Green notes, "Finney tended to emphasize sanctification as empowerment. That you are sanctified, you're empowered by God to preach the gospel or to live out the gospel."
- Initially concerned with health and the "healthy individual."
- **"New Measures" of Revivalism:** Finney's influential book, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, outlined practical methods for conducting revivals, considered a "blockbuster and a game changer."
- Key "new measures" included:
 - **Setting up the conditions for revival:** Shifting the theological understanding from a Calvinistic view of revival as solely God's timing to a more Arminian perspective where human action prepares the way. "Finney is more Arminian. He has more

free will. He says, no, what you have to do is you've got to set up all the conditions for a revival. So, human beings have to do their part. And when they've done their part, then God is going to bring a revival."

- **Unseasonable hours for religious services:** Tailoring service times to suit urban populations (e.g., noontime or evenings).
- **Protracted meetings:** Extended meeting times, similar to Southern camp meetings, allowing for sustained spiritual engagement.
- **Use of colloquial language:** Employing the common language of the people to connect with them.
- **Specific naming of individuals in prayers and sermons:** A controversial tactic to address perceived sinners directly.
- **Inquiry meetings:** Post-sermon gatherings for people to ask questions about Christianity.
- **The anxious bench:** Initially a designated seating area for inquirers, later evolving into a place for kneeling and prayer ("mercy seat," "penitent form"). Dr. Green notes its lasting influence: "it was Finney who began this. This was a Finneyite revivalistic, kind of new measure."
- **Use of women testifying and praying in public:** A departure from traditional practices, though not yet ordination. "Finney was convinced that women should have a place in public meetings in terms of preaching and praying."
- **Bands of workers visiting homes:** Follow-up ministry to connect with those who responded at revival meetings.
- **Voluntary Societies:** Finney's revivals led to the formation of "voluntary societies" for various causes, particularly missions (home and foreign).
- These societies:
 - Brought Protestants from different denominations together for common causes. "Protestants began to learn that Protestantism is greater than just their denomination."
 - Emphasized preaching and the doctrine of "disinterested benevolence" – moving from selfishness to selflessness in service to others.

- Connected conversion with a "transformed life" characterized by sanctification or holiness.
- Believed the church's role extended beyond preaching to "remake society" and establish a just order, including fighting against slavery and for women's equality. "The work of the church is not only to preach and evangelize, but the work of the church is also to remake society and remake the social order."
- **Finney's Significance:** Dr. Green emphasizes Finney's immense importance in American history, noting that "His revivals were a powerful force in the rising antislavery impulse and in the rise of urban evangelism." He is seen as a key figure in establishing and shaping evangelicalism and as a "public theologian" known beyond church circles.

III. Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899):

- Born in Northfield, Massachusetts, into a Unitarian family. His father died when Moody was four, leaving the family in financial hardship and with no knowledge of Orthodox Christianity.
- At age 17, Moody moved to Boston and worked in his uncle's shoe shop.
- **Conversion Experience:** Edward Kimball, a Sunday school teacher working for Moody's uncle, was instrumental in leading Moody to faith. "It was Edward Kimball who led Moody to the Lord. It was Edward Kimball who introduced Moody to the Christian gospel, this faithful Sunday school teacher."
- Dr. Green highlights a plaque in Boston commemorating Moody's conversion in a shoe store on April 21st, 1855, emphasizing its historical significance.
- Moody's initial attempts to join a church faced difficulties, a topic to be discussed in the subsequent lecture.

Quotes:

- **On Finney's role:** "What I choose to do in the lecture, however, is do it biographically. I am choosing the two most important leaders in American Christianity, the shapers of American Christianity in the second half of the 19th century."
- **On the Burnt Over District:** "The reason for the Burnt Over District label is that so many groups began in upstate New York... Well, it will continue to have that label

because of the Finneyite revival that started to take place in upper-state New York, upstate New York."

- **On Finney's integration of gospel and social action:** "With Charles Grandison Finney, there was no dichotomy between preaching the gospel and taking a social stand on slavery... Social ministry and preaching the gospel are all one for Finney."
- **On Finney's understanding of revival:** "Finney is more Arminian. He has more free will. He says, no, what you have to do is you've got to set up all the conditions for a revival."
- **On the impact of *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*:** "This book becomes a blockbuster and a game changer in terms of revivalism."
- **On the anxious bench:** "it was Finney who began this. This was a Finneyite revivalistic, kind of new measure."
- **On the significance of voluntary societies:** "Protestants began to learn that Protestantism is greater than just their denomination."
- **On Finney's overall importance:** "Finney is an immensely important man in American history by any standard of measure. His revivals were a powerful force in the rising antislavery impulse and in the rise of urban evangelism."
- **On Moody's conversion:** "It was Edward Kimball who led Moody to the Lord. It was Edward Kimball who introduced Moody to the Christian gospel, this faithful Sunday school teacher."

Conclusion:

The lecture excerpt provides a foundational understanding of 19th-century American Evangelicalism by focusing on the formative roles of Charles Grandison Finney and the early life and conversion of Dwight L. Moody. Finney is presented as a pivotal figure who reshaped revivalistic practices, integrated social reform with gospel preaching, and significantly influenced theological discourse on revival and sanctification. The introduction to Moody sets the stage for further exploration of his impact on the evangelical movement. The emphasis on biographical analysis aims to illuminate the core characteristics and evolving nature of Evangelicalism during this crucial period in American religious history.

4. Study Guide: Green, American Christianity, Session 15, Evangelicalism in the 19th Century, Finney

Study Guide: 19th Century Evangelicalism - Finney and Moody

Key Concepts

- **Evangelicalism:** A Protestant movement emphasizing personal conversion, the authority of the Bible, the importance of evangelization, and often social activism.
- **Second Great Awakening:** A period of religious revivals in the United States in the early 19th century.
- **Third Great Awakening (Finneyite Revivals):** A series of revivals associated with Charles Grandison Finney, potentially distinct from the Second Great Awakening due to a perceived gap and new theological approaches.
- **Burnt Over District:** A region in upstate New York known for its intense religious fervor and the emergence of various new religious movements.
- **Transatlantic Revivalism:** The significant movement of evangelists and revivalism between England and America in the 19th century.
- **Abolitionism:** The movement to end slavery.
- **Co-educational Institution:** An educational institution that admits both male and female students.
- **Revivalism:** Religious gatherings aimed at inspiring conversion and renewed commitment to faith.
- **New Measures:** Innovative methods for conducting revivals popularized by Charles Grandison Finney.
- **Calvinism:** A theological system emphasizing God's sovereignty and predestination.
- **Arminianism:** A theological system emphasizing human free will and God's universal atonement.
- **Protracted Meetings:** Extended religious meetings, often lasting for several hours or days.
- **Colloquial Language:** Everyday, informal language used to communicate with a wider audience.

- **Anxious Bench (Mercy Seat/Penitent Form):** A designated place in revival meetings where individuals seeking conversion could sit or kneel for prayer and guidance.
- **Voluntary Societies:** Organizations formed by individuals to address religious, social, or moral concerns, often cutting across denominational lines.
- **Disinterested Benevolence:** The doctrine emphasizing selfless service to others, motivated by Christian love rather than personal gain.
- **Sanctification (Holiness):** The process of becoming more like Christ and growing in holiness after conversion. Justification is the act by which God declares a sinner righteous. Wesleyans often emphasized a second work of grace leading to Christian perfection. Finney emphasized sanctification as empowerment for ministry.
- **Unitarianism:** A Christian theological movement that rejects the doctrine of the Trinity, emphasizing the oneness of God and often human reason and moral living.

Quiz: Short Answer Questions

1. What label was given to upstate New York due to the proliferation of new religious groups, and why did Finney's revivals contribute to this label?
2. Describe Charles Grandison Finney's conversion experience and how it altered the trajectory of his life.
3. Explain the significance of Oberlin College in the context of 19th-century American Christianity, highlighting at least two key distinctions of the institution.
4. According to the lecture, what was Finney's perspective on the relationship between preaching the gospel and engaging in social ministry, particularly concerning abolitionism?
5. Define "transatlantic revivalism" and provide an example of someone who participated in this movement prior to the 19th century.
6. Describe Finney's theological shift in his approach to revivals compared to the prevailing Calvinistic view of the First and Second Great Awakenings in the North.
7. Identify and briefly explain two of Finney's "new measures" in revivalism that were discussed in the lecture.

8. What were "voluntary societies," and what was one of their key functions or emphases in 19th-century American society?
9. Explain the doctrine of "disinterested benevolence" and how it connected to the evangelical understanding of a transformed life after conversion.
10. What was Dwight L. Moody's religious upbringing, and what significant event marked his introduction to evangelical Christianity?

Quiz: Answer Key

1. Upstate New York was called the **Burnt Over District** because so many new religious groups originated there. Finney's revivals further solidified this label as they represented another significant religious movement that swept through the region.
2. Finney experienced a **dramatic conversion** while walking through the woods near Adams, New York, where he felt the Lord spoke to him. This experience led him to abandon his plans to become a lawyer and instead pursue ministry.
3. Oberlin College was significant as the **first abolitionist institution** in America, founded with the explicit mission of opposing slavery. It was also the **first co-educational institution** in the United States to accept women.
4. Finney believed there was **no separation** between preaching the gospel and taking a social stand against slavery. He saw his abolitionist work as a direct outflow of his Christian faith and the principles of the gospel.
5. **Transatlantic revivalism** refers to the significant movement of evangelists and religious revivals between England and America in the 19th century. **George Whitefield** from the First Great Awakening is an example of an earlier figure involved in this transatlantic exchange.
6. Finney's approach to revivals shifted away from the **Calvinistic emphasis on God's timing and sovereignty**. He adopted a more **Arminian perspective**, believing that humans needed to actively "set up the conditions" for a revival to occur through specific methods.
7. Two of Finney's "new measures" include "**unseasonable hours for religious services**," which meant tailoring service times to suit the schedules of urban populations, and the "**anxious bench**," a designated area where individuals interested in conversion could sit or kneel for prayer and guidance.

8. **Voluntary societies** were organizations formed by Protestants for common causes, such as home and foreign missions. One key function was to **bring Protestants from different denominations together** for shared goals, fostering a broader sense of Protestant unity.
9. The doctrine of "**disinterested benevolence**" emphasizes moving away from selfishness after conversion towards a life of selfless service to others. Evangelicals believed that a truly transformed life, marked by sanctification and holiness, would naturally manifest in this kind of outward-focused love and action.
10. Dwight L. Moody was born into a **Unitarian family** and had no exposure to Orthodox or Evangelical Christianity in his early life. His introduction to evangelicalism occurred when **Edward Kimball, his Sunday school teacher, led him to the Lord** in a shoe store in Boston.

Essay Format Questions

1. Analyze the key theological differences between the Calvinistic understanding of revivalism prevalent in the First and Second Great Awakenings (in the North) and Charles Grandison Finney's more Arminian-influenced approach. How did this shift impact the methods and goals of revivalism in the 19th century?
2. Discuss the multifaceted significance of Oberlin College in 19th-century American Christianity. How did its founding principles, its co-educational nature, and its association with figures like Charles Grandison Finney contribute to broader social and religious movements of the time?
3. Evaluate the impact and significance of Charles Grandison Finney's "new measures" on the practice of revivalism, and by extension, on the development of American evangelicalism. Consider both the intended outcomes and potential criticisms of these methods.
4. Explore the interconnectedness of religious belief and social reform in the thought and practice of Charles Grandison Finney and the voluntary societies of the 19th century. How did their understanding of the gospel motivate their engagement with issues such as abolitionism and women's rights?
5. Compare and contrast the backgrounds, conversion experiences, and early influences of Charles Grandison Finney and Dwight L. Moody. How did these formative experiences shape their respective approaches to evangelism and their impact on American Christianity?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Abolitionism:** A historical movement that sought to end the practice of slavery.
- **Anxious Bench:** A designated area in revival meetings where those feeling conviction or seeking conversion could sit or kneel for prayer and counsel. Also known as the mercy seat or penitent form.
- **Arminianism:** A theological perspective that emphasizes human free will, conditional election, and the possibility of resisting God's grace. It contrasts with Calvinism on these points.
- **Burnt Over District:** A region in western and central New York in the early to mid-19th century that experienced intense religious revivals and the emergence of new religious movements.
- **Calvinism:** A theological system, based on the teachings of John Calvin, that emphasizes God's absolute sovereignty, predestination, and the total depravity of humanity.
- **Co-educational:** An educational system in which both male and female students are taught together in the same institution.
- **Colloquial Language:** Informal, everyday language used in conversation and writing.
- **Disinterested Benevolence:** A theological and ethical concept emphasizing selfless love and service to others, motivated by Christian principles rather than personal gain or self-interest.
- **Evangelicalism:** A diverse Protestant movement characterized by an emphasis on personal conversion, the authority and inspiration of the Bible, the importance of evangelization (sharing the gospel), and often a commitment to social activism.
- **Justification:** In Christian theology, the act by which God declares a sinner righteous through faith in Jesus Christ.
- **New Measures:** Innovative and often controversial methods for conducting religious revivals, popularized by Charles Grandison Finney in the 19th century, aimed at increasing conversions.
- **Protracted Meetings:** Extended series of religious services, often lasting for several days or even weeks, intended to create an intense spiritual atmosphere conducive to conversion.

- **Revivalism:** A movement or series of religious gatherings characterized by efforts to awaken or renew religious fervor and commitment, often leading to conversions.
- **Sanctification:** The ongoing process by which a believer is made holy and conformed to the image of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit after justification.
- **Second Great Awakening:** A period of widespread religious revivals in the United States during the late 18th and early 19th centuries.
- **Third Great Awakening (Finneyite Revivals):** A significant wave of revivals associated with the ministry of Charles Grandison Finney, occurring in the mid-19th century, which some scholars consider distinct enough from the Second Great Awakening to warrant its own designation.
- **Transatlantic Revivalism:** The significant exchange of evangelical ideas, preachers, and revival movements between Great Britain and North America, particularly during the 18th and 19th centuries.
- **Unitarianism:** A liberal Christian theological movement that emphasizes the oneness of God, rejects the doctrine of the Trinity, and often stresses the importance of reason, ethical living, and human potential.
- **Voluntary Societies:** Non-profit organizations formed by individuals who share a common interest or goal, often religious or reform-oriented, that played a significant role in 19th-century American society.

5. FAQs Green, American Christianity, Session 15, Evangelicalism in the 19th Century, Finney, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions: 19th-Century American Evangelicalism and its Key Figures

1. Who were the central figures in shaping 19th-century American Evangelicalism according to this lecture?

This lecture focuses on two primary figures who significantly shaped American Evangelicalism in the second half of the 19th century: Charles Grandison Finney and Dwight L. Moody. Dr. Green chooses to explore the subject of 19th-century Evangelicalism biographically through these two influential leaders, highlighting their lives, ministries, teachings, and contributions to American Christianity.

2. What was significant about Charles Grandison Finney's early life and conversion?

Charles Grandison Finney was born in Connecticut but moved to upstate New York, specifically Adams, an area known as the "Burnt Over District" due to the numerous religious movements that originated there. Initially training for law, Finney underwent a dramatic conversion experience in 1821, which led him to abandon his legal career and pursue ministry. Despite lacking formal theological education, he was ordained in the Presbyterian Church after being mentored by a local minister.

3. How did Finney's ministry contribute to a potential "Third Great Awakening" and what is "transatlantic revivalism"?

Finney's itinerant revivalistic ministry in upstate New York was highly successful and is considered by Dr. Green to potentially represent a "Third Great Awakening" due to a perceived gap between it and the Second Great Awakening. Additionally, Finney's two-year ministry in England (1857-1858) highlights the phenomenon of "transatlantic revivalism," a significant 19th-century movement involving the exchange of evangelists and revivalism between America and England, building upon earlier examples like George Whitefield.

4. What was the significance of Oberlin College in Finney's life and for American Christianity?

In 1835, Finney became the first professor of theology at the newly founded Oberlin College and later served as its president from 1851 to 1866. Oberlin College was notable for several reasons: it was the first college in America founded with abolitionism as a core mission, it was the first co-educational institution in the country (Antoinette Brown being its first female graduate with a theology degree), and it was a center for teaching and promoting revivalism and the doctrine of sanctification or holiness.

5. How did Finney connect the preaching of the gospel with social reform, particularly abolitionism?

For Charles Grandison Finney, there was no separation between preaching the gospel and taking a social stand, particularly against slavery. He was a devout abolitionist and saw his abolitionist beliefs as a direct consequence of his understanding of the gospel. He used Oberlin College as a hub for abolitionist activities. Finney believed that the fullness of the gospel inherently included social ministry and working towards a just social order.

6. What were Finney's "new measures" of revivalism and how did they differ from earlier approaches?

Finney's book, "Lectures on Revivals of Religion," outlined what became known as "new measures" in conducting revivals. These included: * **Setting up the conditions for revival:** A shift away from Calvinistic views of revival as solely God's timing towards a more Arminian perspective where human action could create the necessary environment for revival. * **Unseasonable hours for religious services:** Tailoring meeting times to the schedules of urban populations. * **Protracted meetings:** Extended meeting times, similar to camp meetings, allowing for more in-depth spiritual engagement. * **Use of colloquial language:** Employing everyday language to connect with and engage the audience. * **Specific naming of individuals in prayers and sermons:** Directly addressing known sinners. * **Inquiry meetings:** Post-sermon gatherings for questions and spiritual guidance. * **The anxious bench:** A designated place for individuals seeking conversion, which Finney adapted for kneeling prayer. * **Use of women testifying and praying in public:** Allowing women a public role in religious services, which was unconventional for the time. * **Bands of workers visiting homes:** Follow-up outreach to those who attended revivals.

These measures represented a more proactive and human-involved approach to fostering religious revivals compared to the more passive, God-centered waiting of earlier Calvinistic traditions.

7. What were "voluntary societies" and how did they relate to Finney's ministry and the broader Evangelical movement?

Out of the revivals led by Finney and others emerged "voluntary societies," which became a characteristic of Evangelicalism. These societies brought Protestants from different denominations together for common causes, primarily missions (home and foreign). They emphasized preaching, the doctrine of "disinterested benevolence" (moving from selfishness to selflessness), and the importance of a transformed life (sanctification) as a result of conversion. These societies also advocated for social reform, believing the church's role extended to remaking society and addressing injustices like slavery and inequality.

8. What is the significance of Dwight L. Moody and what were some key aspects of his early life?

Dwight L. Moody is presented as the second key figure in shaping 19th-century American Evangelicalism. Born in Northfield, Massachusetts, his early life was marked by the death of his father when he was four, leaving his mother to care for a large family in financial hardship. Importantly, Moody was raised in a Unitarian family, meaning he had no initial exposure to Orthodox or Evangelical Christianity. At the age of 17, he moved to Boston where he worked in his uncle's shoe shop. It was there that he was converted to Christianity by his Sunday school teacher, Edward Kimball.